

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

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MASSACHUSETTS SEVENTH DISTRICT

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MARKEY, BIPARTISAN GROUP OPPOSES CHANGES TO HEATING ASSISTANCE FUND DISTRIBUTION

Washington, D. C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democratic Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today sent a letter signed by 15 Democratic and Republican Members of the Committee urging defeat of a proposed amendment to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) that would slash LIHEAP funding for the Northeast and Midwest. An amendment was circulated, but not offered, at the Energy and Air Quality subcommittee markup of the energy legislation that would lower the threshold that triggers the use of an alternate state allocation formula less favorable to cold weather states and more beneficial to southern states.

“This proposed change in the distribution formula for federal funds for heating assistance would cost many New England low-income families the much-needed federal support for heat in the winter,” said Rep. Markey. “This past winter – with its severe cold and high fuel prices – makes clear that the only change that the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program needs is more money, not new formulas.”

Under the current LIHEAP funding formula, funds are distributed based on a state’s share of home heating expenditures by low-income households using (1) the amount of home heating or energy expenditures, and (2) the heating degree days and population living under the poverty income level. This formula would change to each state’s allocation being based on a state’s share of home heating and cooling expenditures by low-income households if regular appropriations exceed \$1.975 billion. The amendment, reportedly circulated by Rep. Charles Pickering (R-MS), lowers the appropriation threshold from \$1.975 billion to \$1 billion, effectively changing the allocation formula to favor southern and western states.

“Instead of a regional fight over a shrinking pot of money, those from warmer climates should join with representatives from Northeast and Midwestern states in fighting for greater appropriations for the LIHEAP program,” said Rep. Markey. “The low-income families across the nation, especially in these difficult economic times, deserve more help from Congress, not less.”

If the proposed amendment became law, Massachusetts would lose \$4.8 million, if the national appropriation was \$1.4 billion, and \$8.6 million, if the national appropriation was \$1.7 billion, according to Northeast-Midwest Institute calculations based on unpublished data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Other signatories of the letter include: Reps. John Dingell (D-MI), Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NY), James Greenwood (R-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bobby Rush (D-IL), Bart Stupak (D-MI), Eliot Engel (D-NY), John Shimkus (R-IL), Ted Strickland (D-OH), Vito Fossella (R-NY), Michael Doyle (D-PA), Charles Bass (R-NH), Tom Allen (D-ME), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), and Mike Ferguson (R-NJ).

This letter and all other correspondence may be accessed at www.house.gov/markey.

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